

as should be from time to time possible. It was an age in which to defend the Church was becoming necessary, and to apologise for her difficult; so the Bishops braced themselves for the task, and stood by each other shoulder to shoulder, stoutly resisting every proposal of reform. Secondly, as they had long been accustomed to fill the great offices of state, they could not see themselves deprived of administrative power without an effort to regain it. Both as Church defenders and as seekers after secular office, they were forced to be the enemies of the Duke of Lancaster. William of Wykeham was the chief representative of the office-holding Bishops whom the Duke and his partisans had ejected in 1371. His career had been typical of that union of Church and State in the persons of the Bishops, which men had now begun to call in question. His parents had been poor, and he had depended on charity for his education,¹ but in reward for his services to the King as overseer and diplomatist, he had climbed from place to place in the Church, the one institution in the land where the poor could be raised high without causing jealousy or surprise. It was this democratic aspect of the Church which rendered her a comparatively good element in politics. Only three out of the whole bench were at this time men born to great position. The Bishops who became ministers of the Crown felt their responsibility more than they would have done if they had been younger sons of great lords.

The three Bishops who had influential kinsmen² rose rapidly, and possessed an influence strong out of all proportion to their numbers. Neville had lately been made Archbishop of York ; Courtenay of London, and Arundel of Ely were destined in turn to fill the throne of Canterbury. Courtenay, already as Bishop of London the second man in the Church, was a younger son of the Earl of Devon, and possessed in full the violent temper and overbearing manners of a great noble. Fierce opposition to John of Gaunt and hatred of all heretics were his two leading motives in politics and religion.

The Primate, Simon Sudbury, was a man of very different

¹ Lpwth's *Life of Wykeham*, pp. 9-10 and 13, ed. 1758.

² Bishop Spencer was descended from the Despensers of Edward II.'s reign, but the family was no longer of much importance in England,